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The Wright State GUARDIAN

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Book review: House of Earth and Blood (Crescent City)

Roxanne Roessner

May 18, 2020

Sarah J. Maas's "House of Earth and Blood (Crescent City)" takes the reader on a journey through a high fantasy world with magic and cell phones along with constant surveillance and angels who rule the skies.

Bryce Quinlan, a half-elf, lives a lavish lifestyle with her best friend, Danika, the leader of her werewolf pack. Their lives are full of partying, taking substances, and fitting work into their schedules.

That is, until Danika and her pack are all murdered by a demon.

Two years pass by and Bryce Quinlan must reopen wounds when the killings begin again and the accused is still behind bars.

She is paired up with Hunt Athalar, a fallen rebel angel who is now slave to those he once revolted against, in order to not only stop the killings, but also solve the mystery of what happened to Danika and her pack that horrid night.

As the plot thickens and tensions rise, so does Bryce and Hunt's attraction for one another.

This take on modern fantasy paired with modern technology is one that works well. The characters are not able to solve all of their problems through the use of technology but face the same difficulties readers do when technology fails. Signals are lost and computers are hacked.

Maas can create connections between her characters that are felt by the reader. Friendship and love, trauma and healing, comfort and fear. These dynamics are constantly at odds with one another and it all comes together page by page while Danika's story becomes more complicated to understand and Bryce's world is thrown upside down.

About the author

Sarah J. Maas uses her unique talent of creating intricate plot lines that keep the readers, and even the characters, in the dark until the last moment. Her focus on friendship and love that lasts even when someone passes is one that should be highly praised.



Maas has other series such as "A Court of Thorns and Roses", "Throne of Glass" and "Catwoman: Soulstealer".

The novel was published on March 3, 2020 and is the first of hopefully many. "House of Earth and Blood (Crescent City)" is available everywhere books are sold and it is also available at various libraries as well.

How many times were tears shed while reading?

Seven.

The Wright State GUARDIAN

MEDIA GROUP

Retro Rewind: Queen's "A Night at the Opera"

Maxwell Patton

May 20, 2020

Queen is one of my favorite bands ever, and many of their songs remain iconic to this day. Turn on a radio, and you might hear "We Are The Champions", "Another One Bites The Dust" or the marvelous, though overplayed, tune "Bohemian Rhapsody."

Today, in addition to my regular reviews, I'll be starting off a summer-long "Retro Rewind" series by revisiting popular albums from the 20th century and talking about their tracklists, how they were made, and what critics thought of them recently as well as when they were originally released. Lastly, I'll be giving my thoughts on the album.

I don't believe there's a better way to start off this series than looking at one of Queen's most famous albums, 1975's "A Night At the Opera!"

The band

Queen is one of the world's best-selling musical artists, selling between 170 million and 300 million albums. The band was founded in 1970 after singer Freddie Mercury joined guitarist Brian May and drummer Taylor in the band Smile.

The next year, they recruited bassist John Deacon and released their self-titled debut album in 1973. Together, they recorded a total of 15 albums.

The last of these was "Made In Heaven," which was released in 1995. Mercury passed away in 1991 and Deacon left the band in 1997. May and Taylor currently perform with vocalist Adam Lambert.

Queen was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2001 and all four members became members of the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2003. They were presented with a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018. A feature film based around the band, titled "Bohemian Rhapsody," was released the same year.

The tracklist

The album opens with "Death on Two Legs (Dedicated To...)," with a piano introduction leading into a hard rock tune that can be interpreted as a hatred-filled response to Queen's first manager, Norman Sheffield.

The Wright State GUARDIAN

MEDIA GROUP

Next comes “Lazing on a Sunday Afternoon,” a shorter piano-driven track written by Mercury. “I’m In Love With My Car” is a creation of Roger Taylor, who sang lead vocals on the track. John Deacon wrote “You’re My Best Friend,” a mellower tune that features a Wurlitzer electric piano.

Following that is “‘39,” a sci-fi acoustic song with vocals from Brian May. Musician George Michael considers this to be his favorite Queen song. “Sweet Lady” features distorted guitar and is a contribution from May.

“Seaside Rendezvous” features an amusing instrumental section performed a capella by Taylor and Mercury. “The Prophets’ Song” was created after a dream that Brian May had, which features an amazing array of vocals and hard rock instrumentals.

“Love of My Life” is an incredibly sweet ballad written by Mercury, while “Good Company” is a lovely Dixieland-style song with vocals by May, while “Bohemian Rhapsody” is an epic that you can’t help singing along to no matter how many times you hear it.

Finally, “God Save The Queen” is an impressive rock cover of the British national anthem, a perfect way to close out the album.

The production

“A Night at the Opera” was reportedly the most expensive album ever recorded at that point, with a cost of approximately 40,000 pounds (roughly equivalent to 338,000 pounds in 2020, or \$409,156). The vocals and instrumentals were recorded at seven studios in the United Kingdom over the course of four months.

Production on the album required plenty of multitracking to create its vocal harmonies (such as those found on “Bohemian Rhapsody”), and the band utilized 24-track tape to achieve this. Previously, they had used 16-track tape to record their albums (including 1974’s “Sheer Heart Attack”).

The album is a unique offering in Queen’s catalog in that it features many instruments not normally found in their music. Mercury plays a jangle piano on “Seaside Rendezvous” and he and Taylor play thimbles on a mixing desk to create the tap dancing segment.

Deacon adds a double bass to “‘39” (which May had originally asked him to play as a joke), while the guitarist plays the harp in “Love of My Life” and a toy koto on “The Prophet’s Song.”

“It has a couple of the heaviest things we’ve ever done and probably some of the lightest things as well,” mentioned May in an interview with the British music magazine *Sounds*. “It’s probably closer to *Sheer Heart Attack* than the others in that it does dart around and create lots of

The Wright State GUARDIAN

MEDIA GROUP

different moods, but we worked on it in the same way we worked on Queen II. A lot of it is very intense and very ... layered.”

What critics thought about the album

At the time of its release, “A Night at the Opera” received mixed reviews. The Winnipeg Times wrote that “the group’s potential is practically limitless, indicating that Queen is destined to finally take its place among the small handful of truly major acts working in rock today.”

Ray Fox-Cumming, who wrote for the British music publications Record Mirror and Disc, described his first listen as “an amazing rush of music with one track running helter-skelter into the next ... The orchestral effects, all done by voices, are dazzling but come and go too quickly to appreciate on a solo listening.”

More recent reviews have been quite positive. Writing for PopMatters, AJ Ramirez states “Amazingly, while the transitions between genres would conceivably throw listeners for a loop, none are jarring. Instead, Queen succeeds because it pulls from all the best tricks in the library of showbiz history to deliver laughs, heartache, grandeur, and spectacle to its audience at precisely the right moments.”

He later mentions that “it’s the realization of such a unique sonic vision that pushes [the album] into the realm of true excellence ... A Night at the Opera stands as a breathtaking, involving creation, and unequivocally Queen’s finest album.”

Rolling Stone ranks “A Night at the Opera” at #231 on their 500 Greatest Albums of All Time list. The magazine Q places the album at #17 on its list of the 50 Best British Albums Ever, while a poll by the U.K.’s Channel 4 ranks it at #13 in a list of the 100 greatest albums.

What I think about the album

The musical diversity throughout “A Night at the Opera” is stunning. As Ramirez mentioned, the way Queen transitions between these different styles is effortless. Some parts of the record might come off as weird, but I think that weirdness helps the album tremendously.

The multiple epics on the album coupled with shorter, jazzier songs like “Lazing on a Sunday Afternoon” and “Good Company” make the record extraordinary, and I feel that this is an album deserving of a listen by anyone who is into Queen or rock and roll in general.

The Wright State GUARDIAN

MEDIA GROUP

College campuses planning to reopen
Natalie Cunningham
May 21, 2020

As the state begins to slowly reopen businesses, universities are preparing plans to reopen campuses for fall semester.

Ohio University

Ohio University has created groups to plan and work out scenarios for reopening in the fall. They include groups focusing on personal protective equipment, bringing employees back safely, academic scenarios, student experiences, academic policy, quarantine and health needs, and research and lab spaces, according to Ohio University.

Cedarville University

Cedarville University plans to reopen campus to all students as planned for August. They are reviewing university operations and protocols to ensure the safety of students, staff, and faculty, according to Dayton Daily News.

The university is also considering ending the fall semester at Thanksgiving and allowing students to leave campus from late November through mid-January.

University of Dayton

The University of Dayton has created task forces like Ohio University to plan ways to reopen campus for fall semester. The University of Dayton will post updates as more decisions are made and as the coronavirus pandemic changes, according to the University of Dayton's website.

Sinclair Community College

Sinclair Community College has not announced any decisions about how the campus will be reopening at this time. The college is monitoring the coronavirus spread and will continue providing updates, according to Sinclair Community College's website.

Other Universities

The Wright State GUARDIAN

MEDIA GROUP

Xavier University, Miami University, Bowling Green State University, and the University of Toledo are all making plans to reopen and return to campus for the fall semester.

Ohio State University has not yet made a decision about reopening for the fall semester, according to the Columbus Dispatch.

Wright State University has not yet made any decisions about reopening for fall semester. WSU will update the community with more information about fall semester as it becomes available, according to WSU's website.

The Wright State GUARDIAN

MEDIA GROUP

Music Review: “Petals for Armor” by Hayley Williams
Maxwell Patton
May 22, 2020

On May 8, 2020, Paramore frontwoman Hayley Williams released her debut solo studio album, “Petals for Armor.”

The album is her first solo work not as a featured artist, and is supported by three singles: “Simmer,” “Leave It Alone” and “Dead Horse.”

The album is a break from the pop-punk music that Williams had been creating in Paramore, going for a softer and more raw sound that ends up working really well as an overarching musical style. There are a few upbeat songs that steer the record in a pop direction without veering it too far left, and the result is an album far from half-baked.

Highlights

1. “Leave It Alone”

The minimalist, toned down melodies and percussion on this song give it a personal tone, and the harmonies are well-placed near the chorus’ end to bring everything together. It’s a perfect follow-up to “Simmer.”

2. “Dead Horse”

With a sound reminiscent of “After Laughter,” this is one of the more upbeat tracks on the album but it doesn’t feel distant from the rest of the tracklist. The tropical instrumentation introduces itself near the chorus, bringing a smooth rhythm to the track.

3. “Watch Me While I Bloom”

The groove and harmonies in this track are an aspect to really admire, selling this metaphor of growing through personal struggle and coming out of it stronger.

Background

Williams was discovered by managers Dave Steunebrink and Richard Williams in 2003 and signed a two-year production deal. At the time she was 14 years old.

The Wright State GUARDIAN

MEDIA GROUP

Atlantic Records originally wanted to make her a solo artist, however, Williams was insistent on forming a band and creating pop-punk music instead of the pop songs Atlantic originally planned for her to make. The band Paramore was founded in 2004 with Hayley Williams as lead vocalist, alongside guitarist Josh Farro, bassist Jeremy Davis and drummer Zach Farro.

They have released five albums together as of 2020: “All We Know Is Falling” (2005), “Riot!” (2007), “Brand New Eyes” (2009), “Paramore” (2013) and “After Laughter” (2017). Each of these records was released on the record label Fueled By Ramen.

The band won a Grammy Award in 2015 for Best Rock Song with their hit “Ain’t It Fun.” Williams briefly left Paramore in 2015 due to her depression following Davis’ departure from the band, though she returned after a short period of time.

As a solo vocalist, Williams has collaborated with Weezer, New Found Glory, BoB, Zedd, Chvrches, American Football and Eminem. She officially announced the release of new solo music on Dec. 27, 2019, and premiered the album’s lead single

“Simmer” on January 22. The first two sections of this record were originally released as extended plays, with “Petals For Armor I” coming out on February 6. This was shortly followed by “Petals for Armor II” on April 21. The title “Petals for Armor” comes

from a lyric in “Simmer.” Williams explained in an interview with BBC 1 Radio that the lyric’s inspiration came from a belief that “the best way for me to protect myself is to be vulnerable.”

That vulnerability shows on this record and it doesn’t harm the album. Instead, the rawness and experimental sound on “Petals for Armor” allows the record to soar to new heights.

Williams’ vocals are as powerful as they’ve ever been, easily able to convey emotion through a nice groove. This doesn’t feel like a Paramore record, and that’s great. For Williams, the album is a metamorphosis of sorts.

While its instrumentals may draw comparisons to Radiohead, I don’t believe that’s a bad thing. The melodramatic and upbeat songs clash well together, mixing to create a really lovely sound.



Breaking: WSU announces budget deficit reduced to \$1.5 million, surplus possible
Makenzie Hoeflerlin
May 22, 2020

Housing situations, enrollment concerns and the university's budget were topics of discussion at the board of trustees finance, audit and infrastructure committee meeting Friday morning.

Decreased deficit

"The big focus that I want everyone to have, that we are all working towards and that I want everyone to have, is a focus in 2023. Where we have stability, where our university can thrive," said Trustee Douglas Fetcher.

The university has decreased the potential deficit from \$11.1 million to \$1.5 million, according to Sommer Todd, director of University Fiscal Services.

"We are hoping that we will end up at a break even and potentially maybe even a small surplus," said Todd.

"As we all know 30 days ago, even prior to that, when the coronavirus situation hit, it impacted the university's financial situation in a way that none of us had expected," said Greg Sample, executive vice president and chief operating officer. "To sit here today, at the point where we are and to look to see that we have reduced that potential deficit from \$11.1 million down to \$1.5 million, and we have still about 45 days to go in the budget year is phenomenal."

Thanking the community

Sample reiterated that they are reporting the information, but the progress is the result of the university community coming together.

"We effectively pulled a parking break on the universities spending as we were going down the road at 20 miles an hour," said Sample. "It's phenomenal that we are where we are, but the thanks goes out to the entire Wright State community."

Sample is completely optimistic that with 45 days to go, they can move this situation from a completely negative, to a neutral, to a positive by the end of the fiscal year.

The Wright State GUARDIAN

MEDIA GROUP

In the months following the pandemic and the closure of the university, President Sue Edwards has asked certain leaders to voluntarily reduce work time to save the university salary dollars. Jerry Hensley, CaTS web accessibility coordinator, asked if this was baked into the numbers.

According to Sommers, the reduction in salary dollars is not yet included in the numbers.

“Based upon the rough estimates that we have... it’s roughly around 250,000 dollars,” said Edwards.

“So it’s a relatively small number,” said Hensley.

“But over two months it’s half a million,” said Edwards. “It’s much appreciated and it does help us going down the road and we are very thankful for all of those staff that are participating in that particular enterprise.”

Enrollment concerns

“We are still losing more revenue than we are in cost savings,” said Steve Sherbet, university bursar. “That is primarily because of enrollment decreases. There has been a trend of enrollment going down and with coronavirus acting as a sort of catalyst, the concern there is that enrollment could drop even more quickly.”

Sherbet shared the importance of developing new strategies to employ for enrollment and retention, but particularly enrollment.

“There is a lot of talk on the expense side, and revenue is something that we have to work on too,” said Trustee Marty Grunder. “I am very excited to see what Mr. Durdle (chief recruitment and admissions officer) can do.”

Issues in contract approvals

All contracts were not officially approved, but moved forward for a future approval in June.

A specific contract with Baker and Hostetler requested an additional \$400,000 to cover payments for legal services for the AAUP – WSU contract negotiations.

Bruce Langos pointed out that this did not come back to the board for the proper approval.

“If anybody should be following the rules of the process here that were established, it should be the law department,” said Langos. “Not having the proper approvals and information and so forth is really unacceptable for whoever is doing this sort of thing. It’s unfortunate that this would



come to us the way that it has. It was completely preventable, I just don't like seeing things like this."

Larry Chan, vice president for legal affairs and general counsel, took responsibility for the approval of amounts without going through the proper steps.

"I apologize to the board, it was my oversight with regard to any authorization amounts," said Chan.

Chan then continued to explain about the initial approval and assured the board that the mistake would not happen again.

Housing negotiations

The university is currently negotiating with AM management for their housing contract for next year. They are in the process of cleaning up the contract and adjusting to situations involving the coronavirus.

"There was not a single university... which was prepared to take on the responsibility of dealing with students that may have been impacted by the pandemic and tested positive," said Sample. "So we've learned our lessons and are collectively knocking on wood, figuratively, that we did not have a big outbreak at Wright State."

"Both sides (Wright State and AM management) need to be owning their respective responsibilities in the event that one of our students does test positive in the fall or in the following spring," said Sample.

The Board of Trustees expressed concerns about certain situations that may arise in the future such as housing only being 75 percent full, WSU not projecting accurately the number of students returning to housing, and potentially having a second round of the coronavirus outbreak.

Sample assured the board that under a new contract, WSU would not be under liability.

"We were at potential risk in the current contract because of the coronavirus situation," said Sample. "Had a student, in AM management, tested positive for coronavirus, there was ambiguity in the contract as to whose financial responsibility it was to provide that student with isolation and other services necessary. That is one of the areas we are cleaning up in the AM management contract."

***The Wright State* GUARDIAN**

MEDIA GROUP

WSU leadership vows that they will do all that they can to sustain the university in the long run. Additionally, Sample says that the positive remediation efforts are due to efforts all across campus.

“This is a result of the university coming together,” said Sample.

“I want to see it [the institution] succeed,” said Sherbet. “I know it can succeed. We will look different in the future no doubt about it. But many other institutions are going to look different going forward too. So we need to find that shared vision of what Wright State will look like moving forward where we will still provide a vital service to our southwest Ohio community and raider country and move forward into the future.”